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RULES

FOR THE

Government of the Alms-House

IN THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK,

APPROVED AND AGREED TO

AT A

COMMON COUNCIL,

ON MONDAY, THE SIXTH DAY OF OCTOBER,

1800.

—NEW-YORK:—

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RULES

FOR THE

GOVERNMENT of the ALMS-HOUSE

IN THE

CITY OF NEW-YOK.

THE Committee appointed to report a plan for the better government of the Alms-Houſe, have reflected upon the ſubject, with the attention due to every thing that relates to the employment and ſupport of the poor.

They conſider this inſtitution as a detached part of the regular ſyſtem of Police, which comprehend the relief of the neceſſitous, the encouragement of induſtry, and the prevention of crimes.—The deſign of the inſtitution is to provide for the comfortable maintenance of ſuch paupers as are unable to gain ſubſiſtence by labor, and have either a legal ſettlement in the city, or no other legal proviſion for their ſupport.

Hence it appears that thoſe who are able to maintain themſelves by induſtry, are not the primary objects of the inſtitution—where ſuch perſons are unwilling to work, they cannot be, in any point of view, objects of public charity; and inſtead of being ſupported in idleneſs, they are to be corrected by the vigilance of the police. Where, on the contrary, the poor have ſtrength and inclination to labor for their ſubſiſtence, they are entitled to encouragement and reward; and in our country (the price of labor being high and employment plenty) they generally receive it. Inſtances, however, may occur, where employment may be wanting; and in all ſuch caſes, ſuitable work ſhould be furniſhed to the applicants, either at home, or in ſome other public rooms, where they might receive a portion of their pay in good and wholeſome food, for themſelves and their families.

Excluding, therefore, from this inſtitution, all thoſe claſſes of the poor, which are able to gain, by their induſtry, the means of ſubſiſtence, ſtill it will neceſſarily contain perſons of many different deſcriptions; ſome of them reduced to indigence, by diſeaſe and misfortune; others, whoſe wants are the effects of vice and intemperance; others again, in the laſt ſtage of life, bending under the weight of age and infirmities; and others, who in their infancy, have been thrown upon the public charity, for ſupport and education. An inſtitution, comprehending ſuch a variety of characters, muſt be complicated in its nature, and ſubject to abuſes, which it is difficult to remedy.

The chief ends to be purſued, and of which ſight ſhould never be loſt—are,

I. *The comfort and welfare of those who are dependent upon the public charity—and*

II. *The due administration of the funds appropriated to the support of the poor, by avoiding all unnecessary expence, and introducing a regular system of management and accounts.*

The firſt of theſe general heads, includes all that relates to the claſſing, diet, cloathing, health and general treatment of the paupers; the education and binding out of the children, and the preſervation of decency, ſobriety, and cleanlineſs—the committee ſuppoſe that it is of great importance,

1. That the different deſcriptions of paupers ſhould be ſeparated as far as poſſible, into different claſſes; and thoſe whoſe lives have been uniformly virtuous, ſhould not be confounded with perſons of another character.

2. The practice of ſuffering perſons of different ſexes to live promiſcuouſly in the ſame rooms, ſhould, for the ſake of decency and propriety, be carefully avoided.

3. The greateſt attention ſhould be paid to the cleanlineſs of the houſe, and of the perſons of the paupers, and of the frequent airing of their rooms and bedding.

4. The diet of the paupers, ſhould be palatable and nutritious, and ſerved to them with regularity and neatneſs, at ſtated hours.

5. Such of the paupers as are capable of any work, ſhould be furniſhed with it; and ſhould receive a ſuitable compenſation.

6. The ſick, ſhould in general, be ſeparated from thoſe who are in health.

7. A due ſenſe of religion ſhould be carefully inculcated, as the greateſt comfort under temporal afflictions; and for this purpoſe, a few pious books might be furniſhed, divine ſervice performed in the houſe as often as might be convenient, and ſuch of the paupers as are capable, encouraged in reading to the others.

8. Spirituous and ſtrong liquors ſhould be abſolutely interdicted, unleſs when given by the advice of a phyſician.

9. The children of the houſe ſhould be under the government of careful matrons—they ſhould be uniformly dreſſed and lodged in ſeparate apartments, according to their different ſexes; they ſhould be kept as much as poſſible from the other paupers, habituated to decency, cleanlineſs and order, and carefully inſtructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The girls ſhould alſo be taught to ſew and knit.

10. When the children arrive at proper ages, great care ſhould be taken to furniſh them with ſuitable places, that they may be inſtructed in ſome uſeful trade or occupation; and as the Commerce and Navy of the country are becoming of great importance, it would be well if there

was a power of binding to the ſea-ſervice, when it ſhould be judged moſt advantageous.

With regard to the ſecond general head, viz. the due adminiſtration of the funds appropriated to the ſupport of the poor, œconomy is the eſſential principle to be adopted, as far as may be conſiſtent with the primary objects of the Inſtitution. It is certain that the maintenance of the Poor in this City is, and for a long time has been, a heavy burthen upon the citizens; perhaps the moſt weighty in the catalogue of their Taxes. It is alſo to be expected, from the growing bulk and population of the Town, as well as from extraneous circumſtances, that the burthen, in its aggregate, will continue to increaſe. Hence a conſtant attention to œconomy and order, in this important branch of the public expenditures, is a manifeſt and ſerious duty, which the Corporation owe to themſelves and their conſtituents.

The public have an undoubted right to expect, that as they pay, and muſt continue to pay this heavy tax, it will be prudently expended and duly accounted for; which can only be effected by purſuing a regular ſyſtem of management, and keeping fair and clear entries of all the tranſactions relating to the Alms-Houſe.

In this view it will be neceſſary,

1. That great attention ſhould be paid to the purchaſe of proviſions, fuel, cloathing, medicines, and other neceſſaries for the Houſe.

2. That the management and expenditure of theſe ſeveral articles, and particularly of the fuel, ſhould be diligently guarded.

That regular accounts ſhould be kept in the moſt perfect and ſyſtematic manner, of all purchaſes and expenditures of articles, and of all work done at the houſe, and that a clear and comprehenſive ſtate of the whole, ſhould be exhibited to the Corporation at certain regular periods and at any other times when they may think proper to require it.

It muſt be obvious that the ſeveral points above ſtated under both the general heads, are of great importance, and it is far from improbable, that they are at preſent not ſo perfectly attended to as might be wiſhed. This is not however mentioned, with a view of reflecting upon any of the perſons concerned in the management of the Alms-Houſe. The fault (if it exiſts) is more in the ſyſtem than in the men. The doing of buſineſs by a board of commiſſioners, who ſerve without compenſation, is at firſt view plauſible, as it carries the appearance of œconomy, and evidences a diſintereſted zeal for the public ſervice; but in practice this mode has ſeldom been ſucceſsful; very little reſponſibility attaches to any of the commiſſioners. The burthen which no one in particular is bound to ſuſtain, is ſhifted from ſhoulder to ſhoulder, till at laſt it is left wholly unſupported; and as no compenſation is to be received, no one thinks himſelf bound to ſacrifice his own private affairs, to an object of general concern, and which there are ſo many others equally engaged in. The committee, however, are convinced that the ſucceſs of any plan, muſt, after all, depend in a great meaſure, upon the perſons who are to execute it. In every thing that relates to the affairs of the poor, a rare union of ſyſtem, intelligence, talents and induſtry is requiſite; and without ſuch

union as a judicious writer* has obſerved, "Millions may be waſted without bettering their condition." In ſelecting therefore, the perſon who may be the chief conductor of the buſineſs, many difficulties will occur, and unleſs ſuch a ſalary is allowed, as may command abilities, reward induſtry, and prevent the effect of ſmall temptations, it is in vain to hope for any permanent advantages. Having made theſe preliminary remarks, the committee proceed to report their plan for the future government of the Alms-Houſe, in which they will be obliged to ſtate as rules ſeveral things, which they have already anticipated as being ſubjects of primary attention.

THEIR PLAN IS AS FOLLOWS:

RULES

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ALMS-HOUSE IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

I.

OF THE OFFICERS OF THE HOUSE

1. There ſhall be a Commiſſioner of the Alms-Houſe and Bridewell, who ſhall be the ſuperintendant thereof, during the pleaſure of the Corporation, and receive an adequate ſalary to be paid quarterly.

2. The ſuperintendant ſhall, previous to his entering upon his office, make oath before the Mayor or Recorder,

* *Colquhan on the Police of London.*

that he will well and faithfully execute his ſaid office, and that he will neither commit nor ſuffer any wilful waſte or embezzlement of any thing appropriated to the uſe of, or belonging to the Alms-Houſe or Bridewell.

3. There ſhall be a clerk, and a perſon to act as purveyor and ſteward to the Alms-Houſe; alſo a competent perſon to act as phyſician, ſurgeon, accoucheur and apothecary, who ſhall have charge of ſuch medicines, medicinal apparatus and inſtruments, as ſhall or may, from time to time, be provided, and of the expenditure and uſe thereof; each of which perſons ſhall have an annual ſalary, and be appointed by the Corporation.

4. The ſuperintendant ſhall appoint proper matrons to have the charge of ſuch children as are in the houſe.

5. The ſuperintendant ſhall appoint proper perſons as cooks, officers, and other domeſtics of the Houſe, who ſhall be removeable at his pleaſure.

6. The purveyor ſhall make all purchaſes for the uſe of the Alms-Houſe and Bridewell, and ſhall keep a book containing a particular account thereof, with two ſeparate columns, in one of which ſhall be carried out the prices of all that he buys for caſh, and in the other, of all that he gives orders for upon the clerk, and that his entries from day to day, be examined by the ſuperintendant and clerk—that the money to be uſed for the houſe, be lodged, from time to time, in ſuch Bank as the Corporation may direct; and that no money be drawn from thence except by checks ſigned by the ſuperintendant and counterſigned by the clerk, that for the purchaſe of ſmall articles, money ſhall be advanced to the purveyor, but

whenever the caſe will admit of it, he ſhall give an order on the clerk for payment.

7. That the clerk, in a ſet of books to be appropriated for that purpoſe, by way of double entry, ſhall keep a clear and diſtinct account of all monies expended for the uſe of the Alms-Houſe and Bridewell, diſtinguiſhing the ſame, and of all proviſions, fuel, medicines and other articles received and made uſe of, and of all rough materials purchaſed and of the produce and application of the ſame, ſo as to ſhew what has been purchaſed, and from whom; what been diſpoſed of, and how and to whom, and how much of each article is on hand. And ſuch books ſhall be poſted up at leaſt once a week

8. The ſuperintendant ſhall take care that the phyſician, ſteward and ſervants of the houſe, render to him from time to time, faithful accounts of the ſeveral articles which may be under their controul or management, and the ſame being by him examined, ſhall be delivered to the clerk.

9. The clerk ſhall attend every day (Sundays excepted) in an office to be kept in the ſaid houſe from the hour of nine in the morning to two in the afternoon; and his books ſhall be kept in the ſaid office, and during thoſe hours ſhall be ſubject to the inſpection of the ſuperintendant and any members of the Common Council, and any other perſon whom they may appoint.

10. Once in every three months, to wit, on the firſt Monday in February, May, Auguſt and November, and oftener if required, a correct and fair ſtate of the accounts of the Alms-Houſe, and of the Bridewell, for the laſt

three months, ſhall be exhibited by the clerk after having been examined and counterſigned by the ſuperintendant, and the ſame ſhall be examined by a committee of the Corporation, with the proper books and vouchers, and ſhall then be filed with the clerk of the Corporation.

11. At the ſeveral times of exhibiting the ſaid accounts, the ſuperintendant ſhall alſo lay before the Corporation a return of the ſeveral officers under him, and of the paupers in the Alms-Houſe, during the laſt three months, ſhewing their names, ages and places of birth, and ſtate of health or ſickneſs; and the ſeveral rooms to which they belong, and ſuch as may have died during that period, at, or been admitted into, or diſcharged from the Alms-Houſe, which return ſhall alſo be filed with the clerk of the Corporation.

II.

OF ADMISSION INTO, AND DISCHARGE FROM THE ALMS-HOUSE.

1. No perſon ſhall be admitted into the Alms-Houſe, without a previous examination by the ſuperintendant, to aſcertain whether the applicant is in ſuch a ſituation, as to require admittance, and has gained a ſettlement in the city, or has no other legal ſettlement; if upon ſuch examination it ſhall appear that the pauper is legally ſettled elſewhere than in the city, the ſuperintendant ſhall apply to the magiſtrates of police, to make or obtain the neceſſary order, and ſhall direct the comfortable removal of the pauper to ſuch place of ſettlement, and his intermediate

ſupport, and ſhall report what he has ſo done, to the board at his next ſtated return.

2. Perſons having an infectious or contagious diſorder, ſhall not be admitted or kept in the Houſe. The ſuperintendant ſhall give orders, where neceſſary, for the care and removal of ſuch perſons, being paupers.

3. That the houſe may not be filled with perſons capable of earning a ſubſiſtence by their labor, the ſuperintendant ſhall, upon its appearing to him that any poor perſons are in want of employ, and until other proviſion is made in the premiſes, furniſh them with the ſame at home, if it can be done without too great a riſque; he ſhall fix a proper compenſation for ſuch labor, ſo as to encourage the perſons employed in it, and ſhall ſee that a diſtinct account is kept of every thing relating to this head. He ſhall alſo deliver to ſuch poor perſons, in part of their pay, tickets, entitling them, at a cheap rate, to portions of ſoup, or other food from the kitchen, at ſtated hours, which ſhall always be delivered to the bearer of ſuch tickets.

4. Where poor families are reduced to ſuch a ſtate, as to require ſupport, the ſuperintendant, after making the neceſſary enquiries, as to the propriety of their being relieved at the expence of the city, may at his diſcretion, where the caſe will admit of it, adminiſter that relief out of the houſe, in preference to taking ſuch families into it, and for that purpoſe, may order a ſupply of food from the kitchen upon proper tickets, and furniſh other neceſſaries until the pleaſure of the Board be known in the premiſes. The like meaſures may be purſued where paupers apply

for admittance into the houſe, and the place of their legal ſettlement cannot immediately be aſcertained.

5. Such perſons, as in the judgment of the ſuperintendant, can maintain themſelves, ſhall be diſcharged by him from time to time.

III.

RULES RELATING TO CLASSING, AND CONDUCT OF THE PAUPERS IN THE HOUSE.

1. The Paupers ſhall be claſſed into different rooms or meſſes, at the diſcretion of the superintendant, who ſhall take care in general, that perſons of different character or ſexes ſhall not reſide in the same room, unleſs as far as it may be neceſſary for the care of the ſick. Where married perſons are in the Houſe, they ſhall, as far as it may be practicable, reſide by themſelves.

2. All profane and looſe converſation, quarrelling and drunkenneſs, and in general, every thing of a criminal or immoral tendency ſhall be reſtrained. If any of the paupers offend in any of thoſe particulars, they ſhall be puniſhed at the diſcretion of the ſuperintendant by public admonition, removal from the room or meſs to which they belong, wearing a badge of infamy, ſolitary confinement or removal to the Bridewell, if they continue incorrigible; but in the laſt caſe, the order of a magiſtrate is to be obtained upon his examination of the circumſtances.

3. Such of the Paupers as are capable of work, ſhall be furniſhed with ſuitable employment. It ſhall be

in the power of the ſuperintendant to reward the Induſtrious by ſmall gratuities, to be reported to the board, and to be laid out with their approbation for cloathing or other articles, contributing to the greater comfort of the perſon deſerving it.

4. None of the Paupers ſhall be permitted to go abroad without licence from the ſuperintendant, who ſhall give them a printed ticket ſigned by himſelf for that purpoſe, if he thinks proper to grant ſuch licence. If any of the paupers ſhall be found abroad without ſuch licence, or having the ſame, ſhall be found intoxicated, or be guilty of diſorderly conduct, or ſolicit or take alms, the perſon offending ſhall be proceeded againſt as a common vagrant, and it ſhall be the duty of all peace officers to apprehend ſuch offender.

5th. All paupers permitted to go abroad ſhall return to the houſe before ſunſet, unleſs eſpecially licenced to the contrary.

6th. To every room there ſhall be appointed a ſuitable perſon as an overſeer, removable at the pleaſure of the ſuperintendant, who ſhall take care that no diſorders are committed in the ſame, and ſhall from time to time report to the ſuperintendant, every offence that may have been committed.

7. At the hour of eight in the evening in the winter and nine in the ſummer, all fire and candles are to be extinguiſhed in the ſeveral apartments, unleſs where from ſickneſs or other good cauſe, the ſuperintendant ſhall otherwiſe direct.

IV.

OF THE HOUSE.

1. The bed-rooms and houſe in general ſhall be uniformly kept clean and neat. The beds made before the hour of breakfaſt. The rooms and bedding frequently aired, and no cooking allowed in any of the rooms, unleſs in caſes where, on account of ſickneſs, the ſuperintendant or phyſician may allow the ſame.

2. If any of the paupers ſhall do any injury to the building, or any of its appurtenances, or commit any wilfulful waſte or deſtruction of fuel, proviſions, cloathing, or any other articles entruſted to them or belonging to the houſe, they ſhall be puniſhed at the pleaſure of the ſuperintendant in any of the ways herein before deſcribed, according to the nature of the offence.

3. The ſeveral officers and attendants in the houſe ſhall have it in their charge not to commit or ſuffer any waſte or deſtruction, and to report every inſtance thereof without delay, to the ſuperintendant.

4. No ſtrong liquor ſhall be admitted without the order of the ſuperintendant, unleſs preſcribed by the phyſician; and if any of the paupers ſhall offend in this particular, or ſhall be ſeen intoxicated in the houſe, the offenders ſhall, in every caſe, be puniſhed at the ſuperintendant's diſcretion in any of the ways above preſcribed.

5. The ſuperintendant ſhall be empowered, from time to time, to eſtabliſh bye laws for the government of

the houſe, and to alter the ſame, which laws ſhall continue in force during the pleaſure of the corporation.

V.

OF CLOATHING AND DIET FOR THE PAUPERS.

1. Each pauper ſhall be provided with neat and comfortable clothing, which ſhall be made as nearly uniform as may be, and ſhall have a change of linen at leaſt twice a week during the ſummer, and once a week during the reſidue of the year.

2. The linen ſhall be numbered, and ſhall be appropriated to the reſpective paupers, and ſhall be, from time to time, carefully mended; and every appearance of filth and rags ſhall be avoided.

3. The ſuperintendant ſhall, from time to time, give directions as to a courſe of diet for the paupers, and is to be attentive that the ſame be wholeſome, nutritious and palatable. Upon this ſubject he ſhall, as ſoon as may be, furniſh a report to the board; and ſhall from time to time furniſh the board with the bill of fare of the paupers. It is recommended that he pay attention to the hints upon this ſubject in Count Rumford's Eſſays, ſo as to give them a fair trial.

4. The food of the paupers ſhall be ſerved up in the ſeveral apartments, at ſuch ſtated hours as the ſuperintendant may appoint for each room, and ſhall be ſerved in a clean and neat manner.

The ſeveral paupers ſhall, at all times, and during their meals in particular, behave themſelves in a quiet and orderly manner; and any offences againſt this article, ſhall be reported to the ſuperintendant for reprehenſion or puniſhment as he may ſee fit.

6. Care ſhall be taken that there be a ſufficiency of food to ſupply thoſe from the kitchen who may have tickets for that purpoſe.

VI.

OF FUEL.

1. The fuel ſhall be apportioned to the kitchen and ſeveral apartments of the houſe with due œconomy.

2. Every poſſible meaſure ſhall be taken to aſcertain the neceſſary expenditure of fuel for every office and apartment of the houſe, and to regulate the delivery of it accordingly, ſo that the expenditure of it may be reduced to a ſyſtem.

3. Every improvement in the management of fuel, which may be ſuggeſted with any probability of ſucceſs, and for the eaſieſt and cheapeſt manner of warming the houſe by ſtoves, flues or otherwiſe, ſhall be fairly tried at the charge of the board; that this great and increaſing ſource of expence, may be kept within as narrow bounds as may be conſiſtent with the health and comfort of the poor. The attention of the ſuperintendant ſhall, from time to time, be particularly directed to this point, and all neceſſary experiments ſhall be made under his direction.

VII.

OF THE SICK.

1. Such of the ſick as can be removed with any ſafety, ſhall be placed in a proper apartment or apartments ſeparate from the well.

2. The ſick and convaleſcent ſhall receive ſuch food and medicines as the phyſician may preſcribe, aud have proper attendance, which ſhall be provided under the direction of the ſuperintendant.

3. In the management of the ſick, there ſhall be the greateſt care to remove from them every ſpecies of filth, to preſerve their rooms ſufficiently aired, and in a proper temperature, and to avoid every thing in the treatment of them which may ſhock the feelings or injure the health of others.

VIII.

OF THE CHILDREN IN THE HOUSE.

1. Care ſhall be taken to provide healthy and proper nurſes for ſuch of the children as may require them; and where this can be done out of the houſe, it ſhall be preferred.

2. Such children as have arrived at a ſuitable age, ſhall regularly attend the ſchool, provided for them, and ſhall be inſtructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

3. The girls shall be taught plain work and knitting, by a proper person to be provided for that purpose, and shall be employed therein, at least three afternoons in every week.

4. Care shall be taken that the children are kept clean and neat; that they receive their food regularly, and that they behave themselves in a decent and orderly manner. They shall be allowed such sports and pastime, as may contribute to their health, but always in the presence of some discreet and sober person; and shall be kept, as much as possible, from any intermixture with the other paupers.

5. If any of the children distinguish themselves by their good behaviour and capacity, the board will direct their being instructed in the higher kinds of learning, and will take measures that they may profit thereby in their future situations in life.

6. The children shall be kept in separate apartments, according to their different sexes.

7. The schoolmaster, or some proper person, shall twice on each Sunday, read to the children, and such of the adult paupers as may chuse to attend, proper prayers and sermons, with some passages or parts of the bible, or some other religious book.

8. When any of the children arrive at proper ages, they shall be bound out to suitable trades or occupations, and provision shall be made in their indentures for their due maintenance and instruction.

9. If any of those who shall have been so bound out, shall be injured or ill-treated, the superintendant shall con-

ſider it as his duty to procure them redreſs. They are to be conſidered, in every reſpect, as the children of the public, under his care.

IX.

OF VISITORS.

All decent and well behaved perſons, may viſit the houſe in the preſence of the ſuperintendant, or of ſuch perſon as he shall appoint, at ſuch ſeaſonable hours, and under ſuch regulations as he shall preſcribe. All the citizens are invited to pay a vigilant attention to the Alms-Houſe and its management; to note every abuſe that may take place, and to ſuggeſt ſuch improvements as may occur to them, in confidence, that their obſervations, addreſſed to the board, will be duly noticed.

X.

ABUSES OF OFFICE.

If the ſuperintendant, purveyor, clerk or phyſician, or any other of the officers or perſons employed under them in the affairs of the houſe, ſhall directly or indirectly make or receive any emolument, not allowed them by the board, or ſhall knowingly ſuffer any perſon to practice any fraud, impoſition or extortion in any matter relating to the poor, or the ſupplies of the houſe, or ſhall embezzle, or wilfully ſuffer to be embezzled, any matter or thing belonging to the houſe, or ſhall conceal any of the ſaid offences, or ſhall wilfully neglect their duty, as preſcribed

AVERY CLASSICS

them by the board, every perſon ſo offending, ſhall be diſmiſſed from office with diſgrace, and ſhall alſo be puniſhed as the law may allow.

The Committee beg leave to remark, that according to the existing laws, this plan can only be adopted, as far as may be compatible with the powers of the present Commissioners, who are the overseers of the poor.

It will, therefore, be proper to consider how far it will be necessary to have their approbation, or procure a legislative act upon the subject.

All of which is respectfully submitted, &c.

RICHARD HARRISON.
JACOB DE LA MONTAGNIE.

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ROBERT BENSON, *Clerk.*

THE END.

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